

# Turnstone

*Arenaria interpres*

Category A

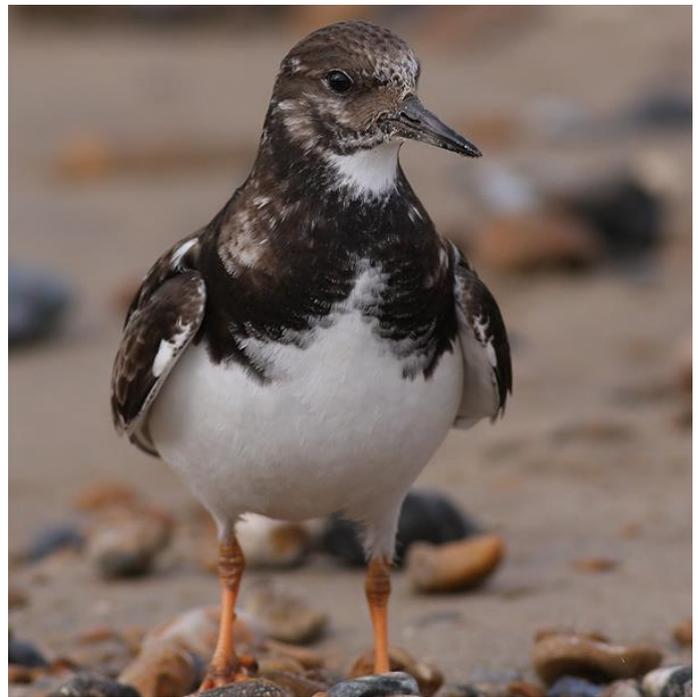
Winter visitor and passage migrant.

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):*

It is circumpolar in distribution, breeding along the coasts of Fenno-Scandia, Russia, Asia, North America and Greenland. Birds from Fenno-Scandia and western Russia mainly migrate through the Baltic and western Europe to winter in Morocco and West Africa, whilst the population from north-east Canada and Greenland winter in western Europe, mainly from the Irish Sea and North Sea to Iberia. In Europe birds have a strong tendency to return to the same migration and wintering sites in subsequent years.

*Kent status (KOS 2021):*

In Kent is a common winter visitor and passage migrant but is rare inland.



Turnstone at the Willop Outfall (Brian Harper)

The Turnstone was not included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871) and the first documented record involved one seen at Hythe Ranges by Roger Norman on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1957 (Norman 2006). Roger considered to be rather scarce and noted just two further birds there in April 1957 and singles in March and May 1958 although interestingly, given its scarcity inland, he was able to record singles at Nickolls Quarry on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1958 and 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1965 (Norman 2007).

Since the late 1980s however it has proved to be a common winter visitor and passage migrant. Taylor *et al.* (1981) provided no evidence of an increase at sites on the Thames or Medway estuaries during their review period (1952-76) but did note a considerable rise in numbers on the Isle of Thanet, which they considered to be a genuine increase rather than an improvement in recording.

## Overall distribution

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Turnstone by tetrad, with records in 12 tetrads (39%), almost exclusively coastal.



Figure 1: Distribution of all Turnstone records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

As Taylor *et al.* observed, autumn passage begins in July and the earliest double-figure counts related to ten at the Dymchurch Redoubt on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 1999, whilst the largest count in the month involved 15 there on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2004.

Numbers increase from August, with counts of 30 or more having occurred on three occasions during that month: 30 at the Dymchurch Redoubt on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003, 33 there on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2000 and 39 there on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2002, and arrivals continue through September and October, when there have been counts of 38 at the Willop Outfall on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012 and 40 at the Dymchurch Redoubt on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2000.

The main wintering area comprises the coastline between the Willop Outfall and Hythe, where counts of 20 or more are frequent and 40 or more have been recorded on several occasions: 40 at Hythe in January and February 2012, 41 at the Dymchurch Redoubt in January 2005 and up to 78 at Hythe in November 2012.



Turnstone at Dymchurch Redoubt (Brian Harper)



Turnstone at Hythe (Brian Harper)



Turnstone at Hythe (Brian Harper)



Turnstone at Hythe (Brian Harper)

Smaller numbers may be found further along the coast in the Battery Point/Sandgate area (where there was a peak of 12 in January 2010) and in the Folkestone Harbour area, where counts have reached 27 in January to February 2005, 31 in November 2005 and 20 in February 2012, but the most recent double-figure total there was in 2017, when 11 were present.

It is however typically absent as a wintering species to the east of Folkestone Harbour, with just two winter records at Samphire Hoe for example (singles on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2012 and the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021).



Turnstone at Dymchurch Redoubt (Brian Harper)



Turnstone at Hythe (Nigel Webster)

Numbers may increase during March to May as migrants pass through, when counts have included 31 at the Dymchurch Redoubt on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021, 33 there on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1999 and 7<sup>th</sup> May 2001, and at the Willop Outfall on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022, 45 at the Willop Outfall on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 53 there on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022, 58 there on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and 61 at the Dymchurch Redoubt on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020.



Turnstone at Hythe (Ian Roberts)



Turnstone at Folkestone Harbour (David Featherbe)

In spring small numbers may also be seen heading up-channel, mainly during the first half of May, when double-figure movements have occurred on three occasions: 14 flying east past Copt Point on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1996, 16 east there on the 8<sup>th</sup> May and 17 east there on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

Midsummer records in June usually involve single figures however 15 were still present at the Dymchurch Redoubt on the 5<sup>th</sup> June, decreasing to nine by the 14<sup>th</sup> June.

Inland records are rare in Kent and Taylor *et al.* observed that they “reflected in miniature the spring and autumn passage on the coast”, which holds true locally. Autumn has produced one flying over Nickolls Quarry with five Redshanks on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1994 and one there on the 20<sup>th</sup> August 2003, whilst in spring singles have been noted at Nickolls Quarry in May 1958 and 1965 (as noted above), and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1993 and 1<sup>st</sup> May 1993, with two there on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1997. There have also been winter records from Botolph’s Bridge on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1998 and at Nickolls Quarry from the 21<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2000.



Turnstone at Hythe (Brian Harper)



Turnstones at Hythe (Glenn Tutton)

## **References**

Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2021. *Kent Bird Reports*. Kent Ornithological Society.

Knight, V. & Tolputt, F. 1871. List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood. *Fourth Annual Report of the Folkestone Natural History Society*. Available at: [www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46103](http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46103)

Norman, R. K. 2006. Some observations of birds on Hythe Ranges since 1950. <https://folkestonebirds.com/where-to-watch> (see "Further Information" section).

Norman, R. K. 2007. The Birds of Palmarsh Gravel Pit. <https://folkestonebirds.com/where-to-watch> (see "Further Information" section).

Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.

Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society.

## **Acknowledgements**

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).

I am indebted to Andrew Henderson and Tim Hodge for providing access to the Kent Ornithological Society archives.